



**Grades
4-6**

Information Verification: Truth Online



**ROGERS
cybersecure
catalyst**



Recognizing lies and being able to tell what's true online can be difficult. The Internet connects all of our devices and allows us to be in touch with others, even if they're halfway around the world! However, the Internet is also a very big place – it only grows larger every minute of every day, as it's continuously being pumped with new information.

It's become very important for kids to be able to tell if something is true online. If kids easily believe lies they find online – or misinformation spread on various websites, mobile applications and social media platforms – these lies can have serious implications, such as making them feel scared or experience low self-esteem (e.g., scary Internet challenges), believe mean things about other people (e.g., articles that contain biased or prejudicial statements about others, based on race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.), and their school grades could suffer (e.g., unintentionally using false information in homework assignments). When kids become more critical about what they see and read online, they're more likely to become responsible digital citizens.

This resource contains information for parents/guardians to communicate with kids about how to conduct research to verify and fact-check content found online, along with the sources of that information.





Digital Citizenship:

Ability to use digital technology and media in a safe, responsible and effective way.

Misinformation:

False or incorrect information that is shared with others, regardless of whether the intent was to mislead others or not.

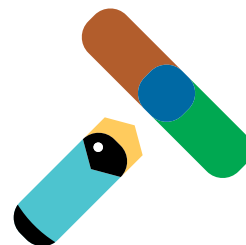


DEFINITION

What is misinformation?

It's important that parents/guardians provide kids with the tools and advice they need to navigate the Internet responsibly; this means explaining that "misinformation" is false information. It could be completely made up, or full of biased opinions of those who are opposed to the facts that they just don't agree with. Or it's possible that someone made a mistake and posted information that's not correct. Either way, if kids share misinformation even if they don't know it's false – they could be sharing a lie or, at the very least, information that's just plain wrong.

It's hard to say why misinformation or false information content is created and shared, or what the creator's intentions were. Often, the goal is to prompt an extreme reaction, such as anger or excitement. Sometimes, it's an attempt to change readers' beliefs about a certain topic, or to make money by selling a product or idea. Alternatively, it could've been a genuine mistake; the creators – such as authors, bloggers, or journalists – could've forgotten to check the facts, or honestly believed they had the correct information.





Social Media:

Websites and applications that let users create and share content, like messages, photos and videos, or to participate in social networking (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and TikTok).



A look at social media and falsehoods

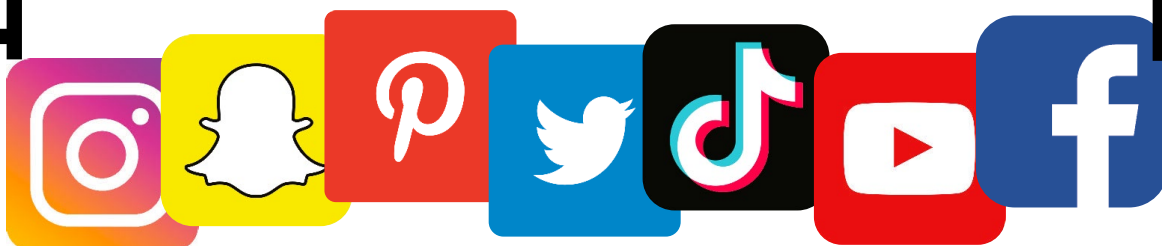
Social media has many upsides, including allowing kids to connect with family and friends, raise money for people in need, give underrepresented groups a voice, and spread positive messages. It also has some downsides, including being used to spread lies and rumours, and create falsehoods that exaggerate people's influence and lifestyle, which can make kids feel bad – and impact their self-esteem and self-image.

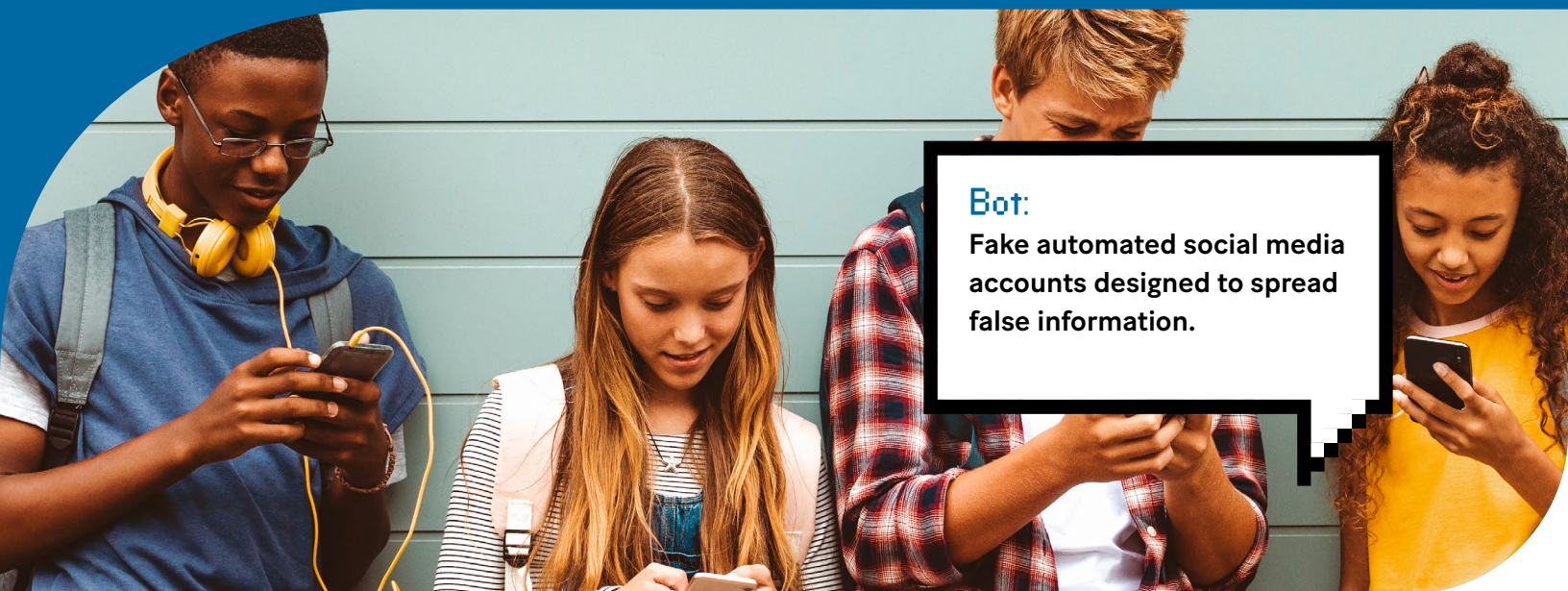
Influence:

The capacity of a social media user to impact public opinion and behaviour.

Clout:

A term used to describe the amount of influence a social media user has.





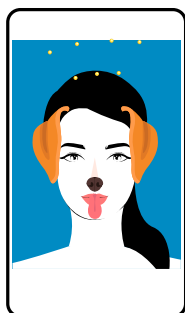
Bot:

Fake automated social media accounts designed to spread false information.

B RELEVANCE

If kids have social media profiles, it's important for them to know and understand that:

- The number of friends, followers or subscribers someone has can give the impression that this person is more popular, or has more "clout" or "influence", than they really do.
- It's easy to purchase followers using bot accounts to build a profile's audience size, which misleads others by giving the impression that the individual/organization has more influence than they actually do. Likes and other interactions can also be bought online.
- Many social media users offer to follow kids in exchange for a follow back; this is not true popularity or influence, but a superficial act to build audience numbers.
- Filters are commonly used on social media; some filters are easy to recognize and may make people look silly, while others are hard to spot and make people appear more attractive or flawless.



Filter:

A social media feature used to manipulate a user's appearance.





Self-Image:

A person's view of their appearance, intelligence and overall worth.

B RELEVANCE

If kids have social media profiles, it's important for them to know and understand that:

- Social media content can be designed and used to display whatever self-image the author wants others to see, creating an illusion that this individual has a perfect and more exciting life than they truly do (e.g., posting pictures of big houses, expensive cars or trips around the world). Some people only post the very best moments in their lives; and the social media images they post aren't showing the whole picture.
- Social media, unfortunately, can be used to create and spread rumours at a very fast rate; and the number of posts and shares of content that contain a rumour can make it appear true when it is, in fact, a lie.

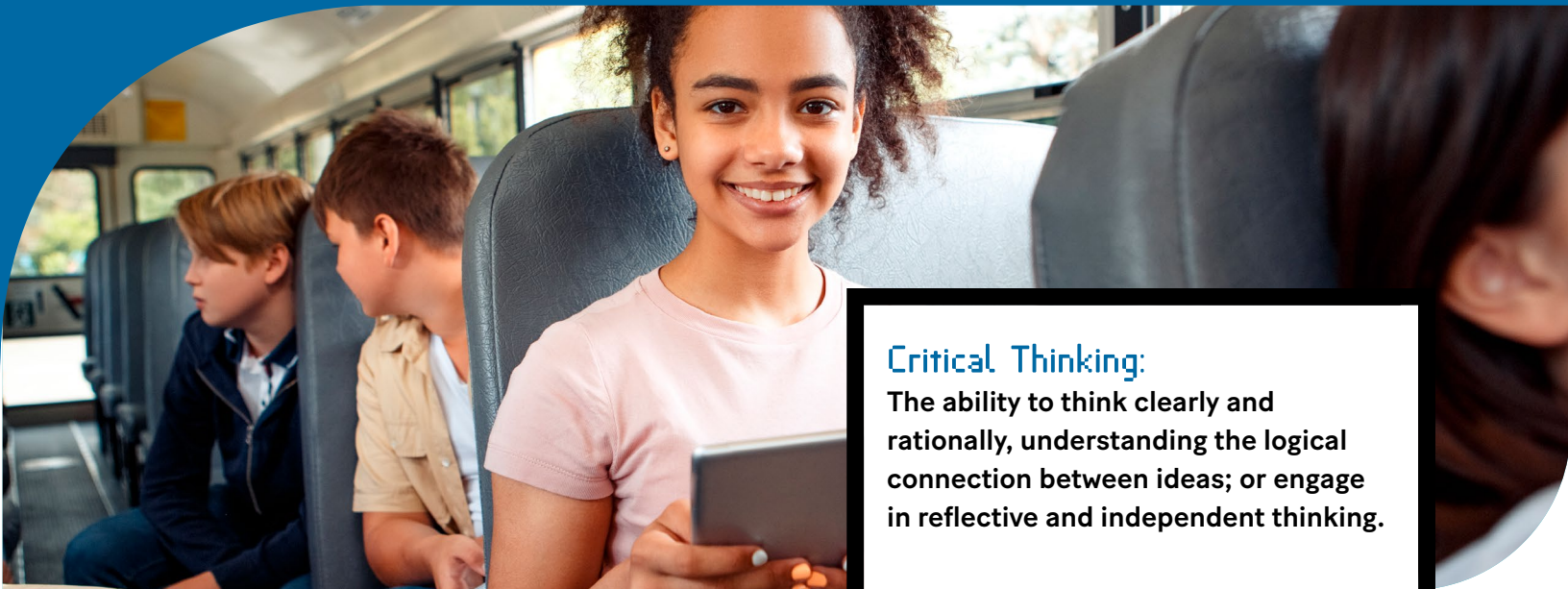
Kids should never base their feelings about themselves, their personal lives or others, on information found on social media – as it's extremely easy to lie or mislead with false or fake content.

Conversation Starter:

Ask kids if they have any social media accounts or profiles. If so, what accounts are they following and what kind of content fills up their newsfeed?

At a first glance, could the content be promoting false information?





Critical Thinking:

The ability to think clearly and rationally, understanding the logical connection between ideas; or engage in reflective and independent thinking.

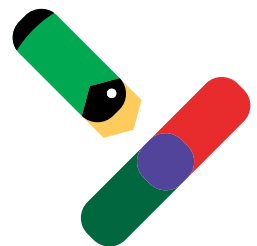
CALL TO ACTION

Verifying information online

Developing critical thinking skills

Encouraging the development of critical thinking skills is important in general, but these types of skills are the first step in recognizing the lies from the truths, while online and in real life. Kids can use the following questions to help guide their thinking regarding the information they read or share online:

- Is this too good or too bad to be true? Is it too shocking or too dramatic?
- Does this reinforce stereotypes about people or groups?
- Does it seem to be telling kids what they want to hear, or what they already believe or feel?
- Does the story being told actually match the headline? Does the story have a named writer or producer?





CALL TO ACTION

Verifying information online

- When was the story published? Is it new? If it's a few years old, why is it circulating now?
- Have kids heard of the organization that published it before?
- Does this organization have reporters and writers who can be found online or on social media? Do their names or bios appear on the organization's website?
- Can kids find another source that confirms this information? Can they find one that counters it?
- What is the URL (also known as a web address, or domain name) of the website? Have kids heard of it before? Can they look it up?

A URL is the address of a World Wide Web page (e.g., <http://www.google.com/> would be the URL for Google).

Look for unusual URLs. Often, fake websites will try to appear like legitimate news or popular websites, but they have slightly different endings, such as ".net" instead of the common ".com" or ".ca".

**Remember
This:**





CALL TO ACTION



Search Operators:

Refer to search parameters; the character or string of characters used in search engine searches to help narrow the focus of the results.

Using search operators

The ability to effectively use the Internet for research and browsing is a great skill to have! When kids understand how to ask search engines their questions, it actually saves time while still helping them find better, more accurate information. This is a very useful skill in any factchecking exercise, including school projects, or for hobbies and personal interests.

Operator:

“ ”

Description:

Words within parentheses will be treated as phrases (e.g., only results with “Moon Landing” are retrieved, pages that have the words Moon or Landing will be excluded from the results).

Operator:

AND

Description:

Means only pages with both keywords will be included (e.g., results will only include pages with both “Moon Landing” AND “Fake”).

Opérateur :

OR

Description :

Allows users to broaden criteria to avoid excluding relevant results (e.g., “Moon Landing” AND “Fake” OR “Conspiracy”).





CALL TO ACTION

Using search operators

The Internet is full of information and sources, some of which are better than others. An effective search is free from results that are not relevant to the research topics or area, by excluding or removing irrelevant results from the search.

Fact-checking:

Investigating in order to verify information or facts.

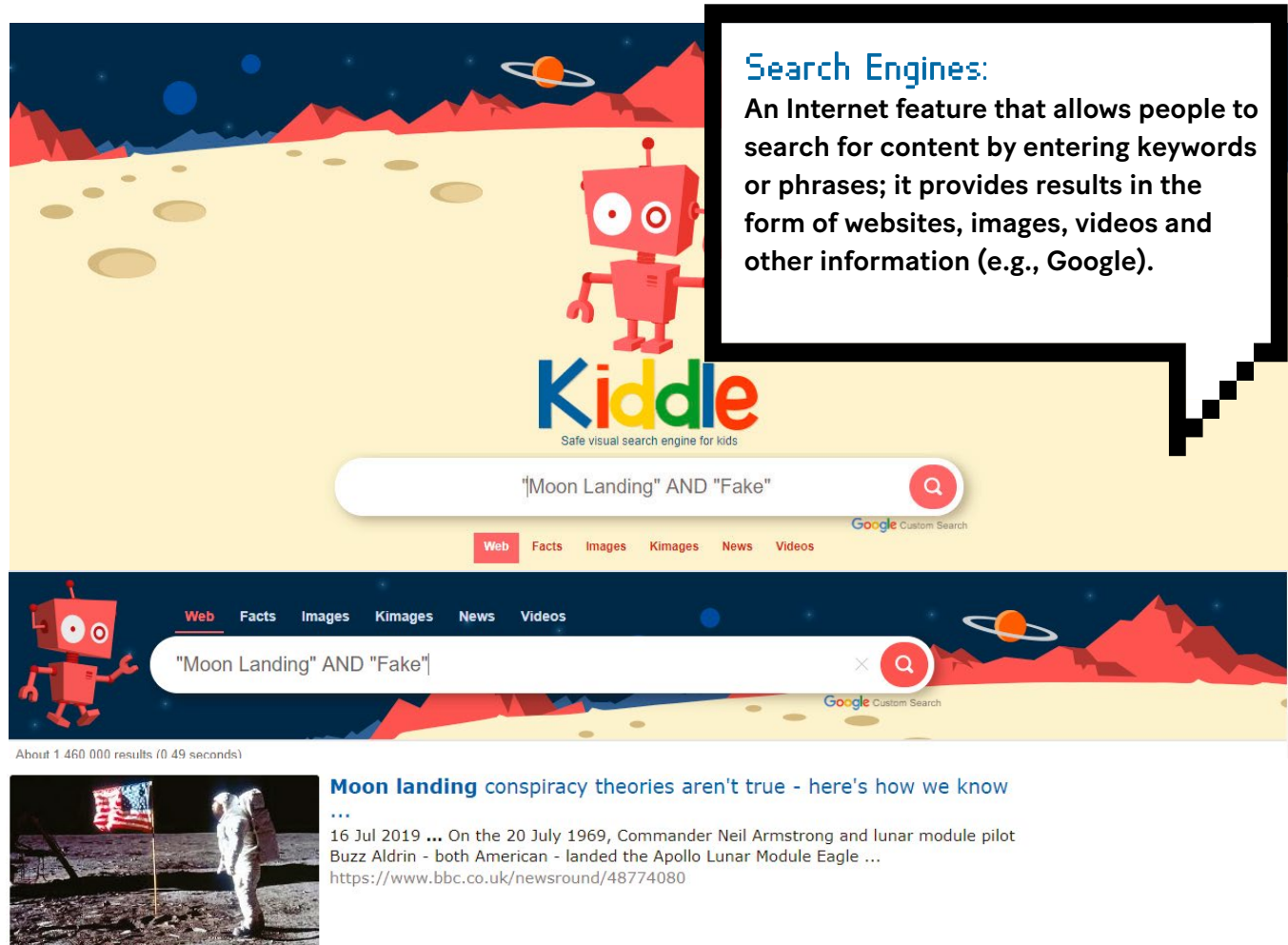
Sample Search Queries	Returned Results
Moon Landing Fake	13,900,000
""Moon Landing" AND "Fake"	1,150,000
"Moon Landing" AND "Conspiracy"	1,030,000
"Moon Landing" AND "Fake" OR "Conspiracy"	1,740,000



CALL TO ACTION

Kid-friendly search engines

Kiddle.co is a web search engine and online encyclopedia emphasizing safety for young children. Encouraging kids to use Kiddle will help them avoid seeing inappropriate or scary content in their search results. For example, try searching Kiddle for: "Moon Landing" AND "Fake".



The image shows a screenshot of the Kiddle search engine homepage. The background is a stylized illustration of a moon landscape with a red robot character. The Kiddle logo is prominently displayed, with the tagline "Safe visual search engine for kids". A search bar contains the text "Moon Landing" AND "Fake". Below the search bar, there are tabs for "Web", "Facts", "Images", "Kimages", "News", and "Videos". A callout box on the right side of the image defines "Search Engines" as an Internet feature that allows people to search for content by entering keywords or phrases, providing results in the form of websites, images, videos, and other information (e.g., Google).

Search Engines:
An Internet feature that allows people to search for content by entering keywords or phrases; it provides results in the form of websites, images, videos and other information (e.g., Google).

Search results for "Moon Landing" AND "Fake" are displayed. The first result is titled "Moon landing conspiracy theories aren't true - here's how we know" and includes a thumbnail image of an astronaut on the moon. The snippet below the title reads: "16 Jul 2019 ... On the 20 July 1969, Commander Neil Armstrong and lunar module pilot Buzz Aldrin - both American - landed the Apollo Lunar Module Eagle ... https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/48774080".

The results show that the vast majority of people believe that the Moon Landing event was real and there's a lot of scientific evidence that supports that it's true. While there are a much smaller number of people who believe it was fake, it's not the general opinion – and the evidence and science do not support the theory.

Using their new critical thinking skills, online research techniques and the Kiddle search engine, kids would have enough information to conclude that the Moon Landing is real; and that claims of it being faked are untrue, or at best unproven with no credible evidence.

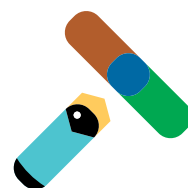


ACTIVITY 1

Activities are a useful way for kids to test and demonstrate their knowledge on the topic covered in this resource. Have them try the activities themselves, and offer support when needed.

Information Verification Word Search

Can you find the keywords related to Information Verification: Truth Online? As you find the words listed below, think about what they mean, what you've learned, and how you can help share this information with others!



H	G	J	X	N	O	K	I	A	K	K	V	C	H	M
D	M	E	O	U	T	H	N	P	T	Y	J	G	V	E
X	H	B	V	M	F	V	T	G	X	N	M	T	E	D
L	P	E	A	E	B	E	E	C	Q	O	O	A	R	I
H	E	W	E	R	M	R	R	I	F	U	T	P	I	A
L	N	Q	C	I	R	I	N	T	A	V	E	K	F	S
Q	S	C	O	Q	E	T	E	O	U	E	U	P	I	J
X	E	R	V	U	C	E	T	Y	X	L	R	O	E	F
D	E	I	L	E	H	B	P	E	B	L	C	U	R	F
Z	Y	T	C	W	E	A	H	N	V	E	A	V	R	A
L	U	I	S	J	R	B	D	N	Y	S	D	O	A	I
B	G	Q	G	S	C	G	P	E	K	W	X	I	Z	T
R	D	U	P	G	H	M	C	T	L	V	R	R	G	M
Y	X	E	O	K	E	T	G	E	F	E	D	M	L	B
Q	Y	R	U	Z	W	S	O	C	I	A	L	T	I	F

CHECKING
CRITICAL
FACT
MEDIA
SOCIAL
CITIZENSHIP
DIGITAL
FAKE
NEWS THINK-
ING CLOUT
ENGINE
INTERNET
SEARCH
TRUTH



ACTIVITY **2**

Be an Online Detective!

This resource has provided you with some great new techniques and tools for researching stories online and using critical thinking skills for evaluating online information. Let's try them out!

1. On your own, or with the help of a parent/guardian, teacher or sibling, choose three stories or news articles that you can find online.
2. Using your new detective skills, search the stories online using Kiddle, editing your keyword search by using operators to figure out if the stories are true, lies – or if you're unable to tell.
3. Explain why you reached the conclusions that you did!

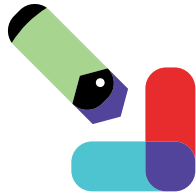


TIP:

Having a hard time finding three stories online?
Try narrowing down your search by entering keywords, such as your favourite restaurant, television show or singer!



FOR MORE INFORMATION



For more information on cybersecurity, or to continue the conversation and learning process, visit the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security website:

<https://cyber.gc.ca/en/>

Kids Help Phone:

Contact by text message at 686868 or by phone at 1-800-668-6868 from across Canada, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week; or access their resources online: kidshelpphone.ca



